

Key

WORKFORCE ISSUES

Technology, changing attitudes help more people
with disabilities work and in ever diversifying jobs

Story inside

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Dual credit streamlines education

Secondary tech ed students can earn simultaneous high school, college credits

by Janet Williams Hoover, Communications Director

Gov. Paul Patton recently announced a technical education partnership that creates a more seamless path to postsecondary education and training for Kentucky high school students, allowing them to get a head start on their college education.

The partnership between the Cabinet for Workforce Development's Department for Technical Education and the Kentucky Community and Technical College System (KCTCS) allows technical education students to simultaneously enroll in high school and community and technical colleges.

This partnership includes all of the systems' major program areas — information technology, business technology, health careers, construction technology, automotive technology and manufacturing technology.

"Kentucky Tech students now have the opportunity to earn KCTCS credit while in high school, transfer that to any of the 28 community and technical colleges and not miss a beat in their education," said the governor. "This also provides them with a solid foundation of skills they need to be successful in today's and tomorrow's economy."



Larry Stubblefield, a former Murray Area Technology Center student who attends West Kentucky Tech, and Rebecca Gordon, a health sciences student at the Shelby County Area Technology Center, watched as Gov. Paul Patton signs the dual credit agreement. Workforce Development Secretary Allen D. Rose, center, and Dr. Mike McCall, KCTCS president, wait to sign the agreement.

The governor noted that technical education leads to good-paying careers in both the traditional and new economies.

"Kentucky Tech and KCTCS prepare students for jobs as computer database administrators, laboratory technologists, electricians and tool and die makers, just to name a few," Patton said. "The schools also lay the groundwork for students who want to become engineers, doctors and scientists."

"These are state-of-the-art technical schools and colleges where young men and women train on computers and highly advanced equipment that is used by today's cutting-edge industries and health care facilities."

The governor encouraged parents to visit Kentucky Tech schools and technical and community colleges.

"It's never too early for students to start thinking about their future education and career options," said Cabinet for Workforce Development Secretary Allen D. Rose. "Kentucky Tech classes save students time and money, give them options for continuing their education at a community or technical college practically anywhere in the state and lead to fulfilling, good-paying jobs."

Two students spoke at the news conference and agreed that young people and parents should consider technical education.

"I can get a jump start to a career as a licensed practical nurse," said Kentucky Tech student Rebecca Gordon. "Nursing credits in high school are considered nursing credits at Jefferson Technical College. This has really helped me from a time, energy and effort standpoint."

Gordon, a health sciences student at the Shelby County Area Technology Center, thanked the governor for making "more of my education count for me."

"If it wasn't for your efforts, I'm not sure I would have a chance to become a nurse," she said.

Larry Stubblefield is a former Murray Area Technology Center student who is pursuing an

associate's degree at West Kentucky Tech in Paducah. He is in the welding program.

"The training I received from both systems is going to help

me for a lifetime to come," Stubblefield said.

KCTCS President Michael B. McCall said that this partnership has far-reaching implications for Kentucky students.

"Our partnership with Kentucky Tech promotes access to postsecondary education and changes the lives of students across the commonwealth," said McCall.

More information about Kentucky Tech, including school locations, is available at www.kycwd.org or by calling 1-800-223-5632.

For more information about KCTCS, visit www.kctcs.net.

"This ... provides (students) with a solid foundation of skills they need to be successful in today's and tomorrow's economy."

— Gov. Paul E. Patton

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WorkAble

More people with disabilities are working in a wider range of jobs because of technological advances, changes in attitude

by Kim Saylor Brannock, Staff Writer and
Mary Ann Scott, Managing Editor

The number of people with disabilities who are working is increasing. The type of work they do is becoming more diverse. Two Cabinet for Workforce Development agencies — the Department for the Blind (DFB) and the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) — have played key roles in this trend.

Technology

In the last fiscal year, 348 DFB consumers obtained or maintained employment, said Denise Placido, the department's commissioner.

"Technology such as computers and closed circuit TVs have made a big difference in the ability of people to communicate," said Placido. "The types of jobs that are available to people who are blind keep opening up."

Sam Serraglio, DVR commissioner, concurred. "Assistive technology is rapidly advancing," said Serraglio. "It's making marked differences for people with disabilities at an unprecedented pace."

Attitude

Employees with disabilities can contribute to a positive work environment and help eliminate stereotypes.

"People with disabilities who work benefit. But employers and co-workers also benefit," noted Serraglio. "People who work with individuals with disabilities are usually enlightened as new viewpoints are injected into a work setting, often increasing overall effectiveness."

"There is a changing attitude among employers. Levels of understanding are being raised," Placido added.

Economics

Hiring people with disabilities is a smart economic investment.

"During the past three years, our department has assisted 15,000 individuals with all types of disabilities find jobs or maintain employment," said Serraglio. "Those 15,000 have paid approximately \$65 million in federal, social security, state and local taxes."

Read about four individuals who have different disabilities and types of jobs but have two things in common — the desire to work and people willing to help make that happen.

Martha Kougher ♦ Pizza Hut order taker

Martha Kougher amazes people with her ability to memorize lists and figures but it's really her attitude that is remarkable.

The Oak Grove resident has visual and hearing impairments. With help from the Department for the Blind (DFB), the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) and her manager at Pizza Hut, Alice Upchurch, she has overcome obstacles to employment as an over-the-phone order taker.

"When I saw the menu, I almost gave up. There were five pages," the 61 year old recalls.

Jenny Tyree, her assistive technologist at the Charles McDowell Rehabilitation Center in Louisville, encouraged her to try, so Kougher set her mind to do it.

With Tyree's help, Kougher memorized the approximately 100 menu items in a couple of days.

In addition to hearing aids, Kougher uses a telephone with amplified volume

and a computer that talks to her.

Although Kougher's typing skills came back quickly, she had never used a computer before this job. Tyree and assistive technologist Dorothy Brame provided her with computer training.

Nancy Tooley, Kougher's rehabilitation counselor at the Bowling Green DFB office, said the assistive technology support from Tyree and Brame was an essential piece to Kougher's success. "Had Jenny and Dorothy not done



Martha Kougher, second from left, works at Pizza Hut. Her manager, Alice Upchurch, left, DFB counselor Nancy Tooley and Tony Simning, with DVR, all helped Kougher to obtain her job.

the technical part and follow up she wouldn't have been able to keep the job," Tooley said.

Upchurch has hired other people with disabilities and says other employers should consider it. "You have got to be open minded and determined to make it work," she said.

"You have to be open minded and determined to make it work."

— Alice Upchurch,
Pizza Hut manager

"What impressed me so much was when I first interviewed her and we talked about the menu, phone and computer and she said, 'I will memorize it.' I thought wow, this lady is determined to do this. I knew ... she was the person for the job," Upchurch said.

Upchurch said hiring someone with a disability isn't much different from hiring a person without a disability because every employee has to learn the job and overcome challenges.

"For people to realize their potential is important. Their attitude and determination make the difference," Upchurch said.

Joe Ward ♦ Livingston County judge-executive



Livingston County Judge-Executive Joe Ward works from a custom-built desk and uses the latest technology to help him oversee his county's business.

Ten years after a vehicle accident left him paralyzed from the shoulders down, Livingston County Judge-Executive Joe Ward was elected to his current post in 1999.

While his wheelchair served its purpose, Ward was in need of additional assistive technology that would help him in his new job. He was unsure what direction to take.

He found his bearing when someone at a statewide meeting of local government officials told him to contact the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR).

"I'd seen some of it (assistive technology) on TV. I didn't know how to obtain it, but DVR was able to make the contacts," he said.

A team of the department's specialists, including two

rehabilitation engineers, helped Ward gain more independence in running the day-to-day operations of his office.

One of the first orders of business was a proper desk.

That's where Ivy Alexander, one of the rehabilitation engineers, came in.

"My job is unique," said Alexander. "If something can't be found through current technology, I try to bridge that gap."

Alexander and Bret Hartzell, another rehabilitation engineer, helped Ward design his custom-built desk, which provides better maneuverability and access to the assistive technology that helps him.

Ronda Thomas, Ward's rehabilitation counselor, and

Connie Talent, a rehabilitation technologist, helped him acquire his assistive technology, which includes several voice-activated devices.

His telephone makes calls using voice commands and his laptop computer is loaded with voice-recognition software. "When I talk, it types just like taking dictation," said Ward.

Ward's increased independence has helped lead him to run for a second term. He credits DVR's assistance and professionalism for his level of autonomy.

"They all worked together and it was a good team effort," said Ward. "They were more than gracious — they are devoted to their jobs."

Dan Riley ♦ Owner of Dysgraphic and Tradeshowjoe.com

Dan Riley owns two growing Louisville-based businesses — Dysgraphic by Design, a marketing and advertising agency, and Tradeshowjoe.com, an on-line trade show display business.

He exudes the confidence brought on by fulfillment.

But a little more than a decade ago, fulfillment, of any kind, seemed elusive. He had been diagnosed with dyslexia, a learning disability, and it taxed his ability and desire to learn.

He dropped out of high school and had brushes with law enforcement.

"I was running out of options. I had no meaningful job. I had no idea what I would do," Riley recalled.

When he was 18, he earned his GED and enrolled at Morehead State University. But the dyslexia was still a major obstacle.

A college teacher told him about the Department of Vocational

Rehabilitation (DVR) and how it might help him with his disability.

Riley contacted Debra Cochran, a counselor at the Morehead DVR office. The department helped him pay for a tutor, tuition and books.

A year later, he moved south to attend Lexington Community College in hopes of raising his grades and attending the University of Kentucky.

Riley continued receiving tutelage and financial aid for school with assistance from his new DVR counselor, Julie Hurst. He also underwent vocational testing and counseling.

"DVR's guidance ... helped me know what I wanted to do," said Riley.

His grades improved, he transferred to the University of Kentucky and graduated magna cum laude.

After working in marketing for a few years, he and a friend began



With help from the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation, Dan Riley dealt with his learning disability and finished his education. He now owns two businesses.

operating their own marketing firm from Riley's home in 1999.

Today, Riley, 30, has offices and employs seven people. Business revenues have doubled each year.

Riley marvels at how his life changed. He wants others to know about his disability and how to overcome it.

"I chose the name 'Dysgraphic by Design' for the ad agency to

show the irony of a young, dyslexic man who once possessed great weaknesses in ... spoken and written language, but now has found his creative niche," Riley explained.

He acknowledges the role DVR played in his transformation. "I've turned around 180 degrees from high school where I had all F's," said Riley. "I give DVR a lot of credit for where I am now."

Mary Rose Traylor ♦ UPS key entry operator

Needing help doesn't mean you are helpless. Ask Mary Rose Traylor who had to learn a new way of doing her job at UPS after she began losing her sight in 1998.

With the help of the Department for the Blind, Traylor resumed her job as a key entry operator in 2001.

Traylor said she appreciates that people want to help but it's difficult to convince them that she can do things.

"You have to educate people ... the handicap is when people won't let you do things to the fullest of your ability," she said.

The Louisville resident said she wanted to return to her job because she needed the health insurance and the socialization. "I like interacting and feeling productive," she said.

The 61 year old has about 45 percent vision in her left eye and light perception in her right eye. She's had to relearn how to maneuver around her worksite.

"UPS is like a whole other city with cross walks, lots of traffic," she said.

Working with an orientation and mobility instructor from the

department's Charles W. McDowell Rehabilitation Center at UPS gave Traylor the confidence to relearn the route.

"There are a lot of obstacles that I had taken for granted before and all of a sudden they made a lot of difference," Traylor said.

Traylor's rehabilitation counselor at DFB, Patrice Flynn, worked with her at the McDowell Center and on her job at UPS. She worked extra hours and even drove her to work some before transportation issues were solved.

"Patrice pulled out all the stops. She was there every step of the way. She didn't have to go to work with me but she did from when I clocked in to when I left," Traylor said.

Flynn gives Traylor, a pastor and the author of two books of poems, the credit for successfully returning to work. "It was Mary Rose that made it work. She's a real go getter," Flynn said. "She gives it her all."

She also praises UPS for giving Traylor the support she needed. "Everybody at UPS was just wonderful. They were willing to go for it," she said.



"The handicap is when people won't let you do things to the fullest of your ability."
— Mary Rose Traylor

Flynn said that sometimes employers feel apprehensive about hiring someone who has a disability — there's a fear of the unknown and concerns about safety. "I think

that's where we ... pave the way so there's not a fear of hiring someone."

"We still have so much to give," Traylor said. "All we ask for is the chance to do what we can."

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It takes a village to build a school



Community members, teachers, students, others had input into the development of the Jackson County Area Technology Center

**by Mary Ann Scott,
Managing Editor**

The first Department for Technical Education area technology center built since 1980 opened in Jackson County on Jan. 2, and its principal, Lonzo Moore, is already amazed at the interest.

"We had 135 students sign up for the first semester. That's more than we thought we would have," said Moore.

The 44,000 square-foot-building is loaded with state-of-the-art equipment in every program area. "We want our students to have the best possible ... quality technical training to prepare them for the future," Moore said.

There was considerable input from department staff and from other area technology center principals before construction began.

"Other schools have had to add on to make things fit," said Moore. "Here we had a chance to design the building and labs to fit the programs."

Input on curriculum was sought, as well.

"We surveyed our high school students, parents, teachers and community members to see what classes we should include," said Moore.

Automotive technology, welding technology, wood manufacturing technology and health sciences are taught at the center.

Construction technology will be added to the curriculum next school year.

The building includes a facility for video conferencing and a 500-seat auditorium, a first for any of the department's 53 ATCs.

"The high school doesn't have an auditorium anymore, so our auditorium will be used by all students in the county," noted Moore. "It will serve a dual purpose as the community can use it, too."



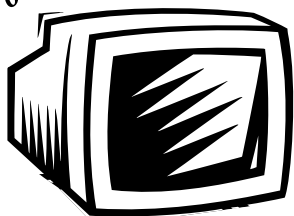
Automotive technology students in class at the new Jackson County Area Technology Center.

Moore said that other ATCs have been built next to high schools but that there wasn't enough land to construct Jackson County's ATC next to the high school, which is three miles away. In a twist, Moore said the county plans to build a new high school next to the center, a plan he's happy about.

"I think that the addition of the new high school being built on our campus will increase our enrollment tremendously," Moore said.

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